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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

BUREAU OF STATE OFFICE BUILDINGS

STATE HOUSE FLAG PROJECT

NEWSLETTER - NOVEMBER 1990

Executive Office for Administration and Finance, Division of Capital Planning and Operations

THE PROJECT

The Commonwealth is engaged in a project to document and protect some 500 military and other historic flags, dating from the Revolutionary period to the present. The bulk of the collection is 335 flags and colors of the Massachusetts batteries and regiments of the Civil War.

They were housed in Memorial Hall (Hall of Flags) until 1987 when they were moved to an environmentally controlled storage in another part of the State House. In their place is a rotating display of nearly full-size color transparencies of the flags of famous and representative units.

The goal of the State House Flag Project, under the supervision of Superintendent of State Office Buildings, Gregory F. Arnold, is to preserve the flags by thoroughly evaluating and documenting each one and by translating the results into a book, educational programs, and proper facilities for storage and exhibition.

The project is supported by a broad coalition of members of the administration, the General Court, Veterans' Services, historians and museum professionals.

THE BOOK

The research, writing and cataloging of the flags of the Spanish-American War, WWI, WWII, Korean War and Viet Nam conflict is complete. This material, with black and white photographs, has been assembled into notebooks. Entries for Civil War regiments 6, 19, and 54 through 60 will soon be available for review. We invite you to stop by the office, take a look and give us feedback.

The process of finding a publisher has begun. Both

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State House, Room 10, (617) 727-2607

commercial and non-profit publishers are being approached. A show package has been prepared with prospectus, Table of Contents, chapter outline, and sample entries (cataloguing and text for 19th and 56th Regts., Civil War.) Consideration also is being given to corporate sponsorship.

MASSACHUSETTS MILITARY AND FLAG FIRSTS AND THE STATE HOUSE COLORS

Our research has allowed us to match the flags with some of history's firsts.

1776 First flag officially described and authorized for use by U.S. forces--the white "APPEAL TO HEAVEN" pine tree flag, prescribed for use of Massachusetts navy. (example 1987.426)

1776 First United States flag, the "Grand Union," raised over U.S. army encampment in Somerville/Cambridge. (examples 1989.033, 1987.430)

1861 First regiment to shed blood in Civil War, 6th Regiment Massachusetts Militia, marching under white flag of the Commonwealth, attacked by pro-secessionist mob in Baltimore, April 19, 1861, four men killed, twenty wounded. (1987.375)

1861 First color bearer killed in Civil War; Color Sergeant William H. Lawrence, 5th Regiment Massachusetts Militia, killed at Battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861. (flag not in collection)

1863 First black regiment raised from free black men, rather than freed slaves--54th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers (1987.202, 1987.194, 1987.211)

1863 First black regiments raised on same footing as white regiments, same pay and allowances, under same laws--54th, 55th Regiments Massachusetts Volunteers. (54th same as above, original colors of 55th Regt burned during war)

1863 First black soldier to win Medal of Honor. Sergeant William Carney, 54th Massachusetts, for saving regiment's national color at Fort Wagner, SC, July 18, 1863. (1987.202)

1863 First Union colors flown over Confederate State capitol, Jackson, Mississippi, 35th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers, July 17, 1863. (1987.205)

1865 First regiment to march through Charleston, SC, under United States colors, 55th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteers, February 20, 1865. (1987.161, 1987.191)

1865 First United States colors flown over Confederate Capitol, guidons of Squadrons E and H, 4th Massachusetts Cavalry, April 3, 1865. (1988.6, 1988.7)

1865 First United States colors flown in city of Richmond, color of 13th Illinois, captured and in office of commandant of Libby Prison, raised by Massachusetts prisoner of war on parole in city, before arrival of cavalry, morning April 3, 1865. (flag not in collection)

1918 First United States Regiment decorated by a foreign power, regimental color of the 104th Regiment U.S. Infantry, Massachusetts National Guard, decorated with French Croix-de-Guerre, June 11, 1918. (1988.123)

1918 First American flag to fly in British Empire without Union Jack accompanying. (1987.251E) (Unsubstantiated claim accompanying flag in State House collection)

1945 First United States Regiment to receive second award of Croix-de-Guerre, 104th U.S. Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts National Guard, colors decorated November 27, 1945. (1987.317)

REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION AND VISITORS

Since 1987 the number of requests to see the flags and to obtain information about the flags has almost doubled each year. As of November 7 of this year we have talked with 35 people. By the same date last year we had requests from only 14.

| | FY88 | FY89 | FY90 | TOTAL |
|---------------|------|------|------|-------|
| # Requests | 4 | 31 | 52 | 87 |
| # of Visitors | 4 | 19 | 27 | 50 |
| # of Descend. | 0 | 9 | 8 | 17 |

Inquiries have been referred to us by the State House Tours, Military Museum, the State Archives, Museum of American Textile History, the sign in the Hall of Flags and by others who had already

A state flag belonging to the 2nd Regiment of Infantry, 3rd Brigade, 1st Division (pre-Civil War militia) and two markers possibly belonging to the 38th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry (Civil War) were transferred from the GAR Memorial Room, room 27, to BSOB collection in 1989 and 1990 respectively.

A national flag and two streamers used in the Spanish-America War were transferred to the collection by James Fahey, Military Museum in Natick on March 24, 1989.

ARTICLES

"A regiment's glory - and gore" by David B. Wilson (Boston Globe, November 26, 1990) talked about the project, several flags from the collection, and included a photograph of a color of the 20th Mass. Articles about the project also have appeared in "The Civil War News" (April 11, 1990) and "Yankee Doings" (Jan-Feb, 1989) as well as being referenced in the Boston Globe, Calendar section, "Sites and Insights" (March 1, 1990) about the Shaw/54th Regiment Memorial.

"Flags of the 55th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry," written by our historian and photographs from the collection appeared in the Beaufort, S.C. commemorative booklet, "From the Pages of History", Memorial Day, 29 May 1989." Photographs of the two colors carried by the 55th Mass. also appeared in "Recalling a historic black regiment" by Chris Black (Boston Globe, March 11, 1989).

A photograph of the 28th Regiment's Irish flag is included in "Desperate Courage," by Thomas E. Rice (Civil War Times Illustrated Nov./Dec.1990). The article is on the Irish Brigade at the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia.

A painting featuring the 20th Massachusetts at Fredericksburg is being done by an artist in Maryland. After a good deal of sorting of flags, poles, and historical records, we are confident that information was sent to insure an accurate portrayal of the correct flag. We expect that this painting will be sold as a print.

EXHIBITS

"MEN OF COLOR, TO ARMS!"
New Bedford Whaling Museum
February 13 through May 30, 1990

The two reproductions, a large photograph of the original flag carried by William Carney of the 54th plus two poles and finials, one each from the 54th and 55th Regiments were displayed in the exhibit.

"OUR HERITAGE OF FLAGS"
Hall of Flags, State House
On Going, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Eight near full-size color transparencies of flags from the 18th, 19th and 20th Century plus two kiosks: "The Constitution and the Flag," and "Massachusetts Sources of the Stars and Stripes" (developed and funded by the Flag Heritage Foundation)
Whitney Smith, Flag Selection and Documentation
Douglas Christian, Photography
Richard Lyons and Frank Zaremba, Design

HEAR YE, HEAR YE

Now Available!

"Massachusetts Civil War Flags"

A Poster, 18" x 27"
featuring 14 Flags
in the State House Collection
Full Color, Black Background

\$5.00 each plus \$1.45 postage

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found us. The bulk of the requests are about Civil War flags, with colors of the 54th and 55th Regiments (black troops), and 28th and 9th (Irish) leading in popularity. Those seeking information include researchers and reenactors as well as descendants. Other requests for information include flags of other wars, information about early national flags, and flag protocol.

Visitors have included people working to preserve the flags of Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Missouri. Descendants of Massachusetts Civil War soldiers have come from as far away as France and Texas. Seven of these seventeen descendants were descendants of four color bearers: Michael Carney of the 17th Mass Infantry, Thomas Plunkett of the 21st, William Bush of the 53rd, and Thomas Ampey of the 54th.

OUTREACH PROGRAMS

January 29 and 31, 1990
Edward Devotion School, Brookline, 4th grade
Arnold School, Brockton, 3rd grade
Presentation by project historian in period uniform on soldier life and use of colors in the Civil War.

May 19, 1990
Grand Review, Washington, D.C.
125th Anniversary Re-enactment of Union armies' Grand Review down Pennsylvania Avenue (originally held May 23 and 24, 1865) The reproductions of the colors and our historian marched with the re-activated Company B of the 54th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry.

CEREMONIES

The Flag Project has procured hand-made and hand painted reproductions of the national and state colors of the 55th Regiment Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry for use in lieu of original colors for educational and ceremonial purposes.

The originals belonged to one of Massachusetts' black regiments, so besides being representative of Massachusetts colors during the late period of the Civil War, they represent the important part played by black troops, and the commitment of Massachusetts to the black cause. The reproduction colors have been carried in the following events:

May 26, 1989, Shaw Memorial, Beacon Street

The colors were officially accepted by Governor Michael Dukakis.

Presented by the Capitol Police Color Guard.

Accepted by the Color Guard of the William E. Carter Post No. 16, American Legion

May 29, 1989, Beaufort, SC

Memorial Day Parade and Services

Re-internment Service for 19 Civil War men believed to be of 55th Regiment Massachusetts Infantry. Governor & Mrs. Dukakis, Representatives Rushing and Thompson, Commissioner Halachis, and Massachusetts descendants of the 54th and 55th were among the official representatives.

October 8, 1989, Cambridge

Parade and ceremony sponsored by Representative Thompson and the City of Cambridge honoring "Massachusetts Pride in Black Veterans" and investment of casket flag from Beaufort, SC.

Carried by the Color Guard of the William E. Carter Post No. 16, American Legion.

January 2 and 11, 1990, Boston

"Glory" tribute to the men of 54th Massachusetts Infantry and premiere of the movie "Glory".

Carried by the U.S. Army Ceremonial Color Guard. Sponsored by the Museum of Afro American History, Friends of the Public Garden and Tri-Star Pictures.

ACQUISITIONS

On Thursday, April 7, 1989 in a ceremony in the Hall of Flags, the American Ex-Prisoners of War Association of Massachusetts presented a flag of the organization to the Commonwealth for installation into the Hall of Flags. Commissioner John Halachis received the flag on behalf of the State with Superintendent Gregory Arnold witnessing.

As a result of an agreement between Secretary of State Connolly and Superintendent Arnold all flags held by the State Archives were transferred to the care of the Superintendent on June 9, 1989. This collection included a state flag and marker belonging to the 1st Mass. Infantry (C.W.), a fragment of the flag that flew over Fort Sumter, a 13-star national flag belonging to Jeremiah Coney who had served on the USS Constitution, and a 31-star flag belonging to the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. The collection now includes U.S. flags with 13, 15, 18, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 44, 45, 46, and 48 stars.

